

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District
Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



Velázquez Requests EPA Study of WTC

Community concerned about air, water quality after Twin Towers collapse

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez has called on EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman to conduct an exhaustive environmental study of toxic release after the World Trade Center collapse.

"During this time of uncertainty, the federal government must take the necessary steps to assess the risks to human health and safety, to provide people with information that will better enable them to protect themselves, and to reestablish a sense of security in the communities most affected by the terrorist attacks," the Congresswoman wrote.

Although the EPA has repeatedly stated that its testing has not revealed toxic substances in levels that are harmful to the general population, recent media reports have indicated otherwise, causing great concern that residents, workers, school children and others are being exposed to unnecessary environmental hazards.

New reports indicate that dioxins, PCBs, lead, chromium and benzene are among the toxic substances detected, sometimes at levels far exceeding federal standards. EPA monitoring devices have found contaminants in the Hudson River, especially after it rains. On October 2, for example, benzene levels from three spots around Ground Zero measured 42, 31, and 16 times higher than Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards.



An EPA worker checks an air quality monitor in New York City. Congresswoman Velázquez wants a comprehensive study of the community health effects of toxins found in the air after the World Trade Center collapse.

"We need a comprehensive survey of the health effects of these pollutants on our community," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The public has a right to know."

Hispanic Caucus Blasts Administration on Affirmative Action Changes would destroy federal minority contracting program

Led by Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus called on national leaders to block a bald attempt by the Bush Administration to erase the last affirmative action program protecting minorities in federal contracting.

Under Velázquez's leadership, the 18-member Caucus demanded support of the 8(a) minority federal contracting program, which requires government contracting officers to look to minority firms first when preparing a purchase for the government.

Two weeks ago, the Small Business Administration (SBA) proposed to eliminate that priority, even though minority contracts have dropped more than 34 percent in

just the last three years.

"If this regulation goes forward," the Caucus wrote to Barreto, "SBA will achieve by regulatory fiat what the courts and Congress refused to do: destroying the last bulwark of anti-discrimination and arresting 30 years of progressive opportunity for minority entrepreneurs."

"I call on our national leaders, to back up their principles with action," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "Do they support fair play or not? We refuse to allow a backdoor rule re-writing to sound the premature death knell on three decades of unfinished social progress."

8(a) is the original minority contracting program, awarding its first contract in 1969.

Velázquez Introduces ‘Silver Scholarship’

Bill would reward senior volunteers with tuition aid

Last month, Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez introduced a new bill to allow senior citizens to earn scholarship awards for their volunteer work. Called “Silver Scholarships,” the awards will be available for their children’s or grandchildren’s education – or their own.

The Silver Scholarship would allow seniors aged 55 and older to earn a \$1,000 tuition scholarship for 500 hours of volunteer work they donate to their community during the year. They can then give this scholarship to whomever they wish.

Under Congresswoman Velázquez’s proposal, a single program in New York City would stand to benefit from \$325,000 in grants each year, supporting 60 volunteers and 30,000 additional hours of service to the community.

Congresswoman Velázquez unveiled her legislation at the historic Grand Street Settlement, which serves 5,000 area residents a year through a senior citizen volunteer program.



Congresswoman Velázquez introduced her Silver Scholarship Bill at the Grand Street Settlement last month.

Campaign Finance Reform Passes House

Velázquez supported historic measure, now bound for the Senate

Last month the House passed bipartisan campaign finance reform legislation, which Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez said will end abuses of unregulated “soft money” while preserving the integrity of the political system.

Velázquez is a long-time supporter of campaign finance reform. She signed a “discharge petition” to force a vote on the bill in 1999, and did the same this year for last month’s historic debate and vote.

The bill is designed to stem the overwhelming flow of cash into the electoral system. In 1992, the parties raised \$86.1 million in “soft money”. That number quintupled in

the last general election.

“Over the past two years, the Democratic and Republican national party committees raised a record \$457 million for their campaign war chests,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “On top of that, congressional candidates spent over \$683 million – a 42 percent increase in spending since the last election cycle.”

“The American people have seen how corporations and wealthy individuals get their way in legislation that ignores the real needs of real working families, and they are disgusted by it,” Velázquez said. “We need to hear them out. We need to make a change today.”

Velázquez Gets Top Environmental Rating

League of Conservation Voters gives 100% ranking

The League of Conservation Voters recently awarded Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez a perfect score of 100% in their annual *National Environmental Scorecard*. The Scorecard reviewed members of the 107th Congress on their voting record related to the environment and rated them on their dedication to such issues.

“My voting record reflects the environmental realities in the 12th District,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Residents in my district face many environmental con-

cerns – such as a high concentration of power plants and waste transfer stations, as well as the environmental fallout from the World Trade Center attacks. Such issues remain a top priority for me as I fight for environmental justice in New York’s communities.”

In all of these categories, Congresswoman Velázquez received a pro-environment rating, giving her a score of 100%. In both the 105th and 106th Congresses, Velázquez also rated high at 97 percent. This year, only 13 percent of House Members received a perfect score.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

Charles B. Wang Community Health Center.....\$100,575	Education Alliance.....\$2,520,705
Expanded oral health services	Head Start program
Fund for the City of New York.....\$1,225,740	N.Y.C. Department of Health.....\$4,483,899
Drug Court training and technical assistance initiative	Immunization program